

COUNSELOR CERTIFICATION REGULATIONS

February 2005

1. Q. *Who must apply for counselor certification?*

A. Counselor certification regulations will apply to all individuals providing counseling services in an alcohol or other drug (AOD) program licensed or certified by ADP.

2. Q. *What are the requirements for counselor certification?*

A. Prior to certification as an AOD counselor, the certifying organization shall require the registrant to:
 - Complete a total of 155 hours of classroom education and training:
 - Education on Technical Assistance Publication Series 21 (TAP 21), “Addiction Counseling Competencies, The Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Professional Practice”;
 - Education on ethics, and communicable diseases (i.e., TB, HIV/AIDS);
 - Training on the provision of services to special populations such as aging; co-occurring disorders; disabilities; gay, lesbian, transgendered and cultural differences; and individuals on probation/parole; and
 - Training on the prevention of sexual harassment.
 - Complete a specified minimum documented hours of supervised training and work experience providing counseling services in an AOD program.

3. Q. *If not currently certified, will there be a loss of job when the regulations take effect?*

A. The Department is not mandating that employees be terminated for lack of certification. Each individual will have six (6) months to register and five (5) years to obtain certification.

4. Q. *Are there any provisions for current AOD counselors to qualify for certification based on experience?*

A. Regulations are proposed for testing out by registering with one of the certifying organizations listed in the regulations, and achieving a passing score of 70%; however, some organizations may not provide a “testing-out” option. In order to use this provision, the individual must provide written documentation to the certifying organization that he/she has been

employed to provide counseling services in an AOD program for the equivalent of forty (40) hours per week for a minimum of five (5) years between April 1, 1995, and April 1, 2005 **or** provide an official diploma or written transcript verifying the successfully completion of an Associates, Bachelors, or Masters degree in the study of chemical dependency.

5. Q. *How long will non-certified individuals have to register with a certifying organization?*

A. By October 1, 2005, or within six (6) months of the date of hire, whichever is later, all non-certified individuals providing counseling services in an AOD program shall be registered to obtain certification by one of the certifying organizations specified in the regulations.

6. Q. *How long will registrants have to comply with the certification requirements?*

A. Registrants shall complete certification as an AOD counselor within five (5) years from date of registration.

7. Q. *What will be required of individuals who are currently certified?*

A. Counselors who are currently certified must register with one of the certifying organizations listed in the regulations.

8. Q. *If currently certified by one of the 10 certification organizations mentioned in the regulations, does this mean I am certified?*

A. Yes, if currently certified by one of the 10 certification organizations listed in the Counselor Certification Regulations, Section 13035(a), you are considered a certified counselor in California.

9. Q. *If currently certified by a certifying organization not mentioned in the regulations, does this mean I am not certified?*

A. Those individuals who are certified with an organization that is not listed in the regulations must register with one of the listed certifying organizations, who maintain the option to grant reciprocity if the education and experience meets the requirements of the counselor certification regulations.

10. Q. *Is the counseling certificate I received from a state college recognized? If not, what do I do?*

A. The individual must register with one of the certifying organizations and provide an official diploma or written transcript verifying the successfully completion of an Associates, Bachelors, or Masters degree in the study of chemical dependency **and** pass a written and/or oral examination with a score of at least 70%.

11. Q. *I have a Bachelor of Arts degree and/or Master of Science in counseling; do I still have to become certified?*
- A. Yes, all requirements of the regulations must be met.
12. Q. *Can local colleges also certify counselors?*
- A. No; however, anyone may obtain the educational requirements at the college of their choice.
13. Q. *If a counselor does not register with a certifying organization within 6 months, what is my responsibility as a provider?*
- A. It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that all counselors are either certified or registered to obtain certification. During on-site reviews of programs, the licensing analyst will issue a deficiency if the individual is not registered, certified, or licensed. The program must indicate how they will correct the issue.
14. Q. *Must certified counselors adhere to a code of conduct?*
- A. Both registrants for certification and certified AOD counselors shall sign a code of conduct.
15. Q. *Will licensed professionals be required to be certified?*
- A. Licensed professionals are not required to be certified; however, they shall be required to complete thirty six (36) hours of continuing education every two (2) years. The continuing education hours required for their licensed may be used to fulfill this requirement.
16. Q. *Are Marriage and Family Therapists exempt from counselor certification?*
- A. Yes, as are other licensed professionals, including a licensed physician, psychologist, clinical social worker, and registered intern.
17. Q. *What are the continuing education requirements for certified counselors?*
- A. Forty (40) hours of continuing education shall include TAP 21 curriculum, special populations (e.g., narcotic treatment, drinking driver), and other topics related to the AOD field.
18. Q. *Will I have to be fingerprinted in order to obtain certification?*
- A. The Department is not requiring applicants to be fingerprinted unless they are applying for employment in an adolescent facility. Certifying organizations may require fingerprints at their discretion, and counties

may require fingerprints for counselors employed in facilities in which there is a county contract in effect.

19. Q. *If I have a criminal conviction, will I be disqualified from obtaining certification?*
- A. There is nothing drafted in the regulations to prevent someone with a criminal record from becoming a certified counselor; however, each ADP approved certifying organization or employer may establish its own rules for accepting counselors with a criminal history, and may impose more stringent standards at their discretion.
20. Q. *How did ADP select the counselor certifying organizations acknowledged in Section 13035?*
- A. The organizations were chosen because they certified alcohol and other drug (AOD) counselors at the time of the development of the regulations. These counselor certifying organizations are known to provide quality services, have a long-standing relationship with the Department, and their curriculum is based on the "Addiction Counseling Competencies: The Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Professional Practice", TAP 21, published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, United States Department of Health and Human Services, Reprinted 2002.
21. Q. *If one of the current 10 certification organizations is not accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies, what happens to my certification from that organization or what happens if I am in the middle of my certification?*
- A. You must enroll with another certifying organization that is accredited; the new organization will evaluate where you are in your certification and may give you credit towards completion of the requirement for your certification.
22. Q. *Does a certifying organization have to be accredited?*
- A. Yes. All certifying organizations shall become accredited by a national organization specified in the regulations within two years of regulation promulgation.
23. Q. *Who will investigate complaints against counselors?*
- A. ADP will investigate all complaints including those against registrants and certified AOD counselors.